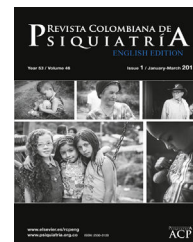




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Experiences of grief and moral sentiments in survivors of the armed conflict in Medellín, Colombia

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to understand the experience of grief and moral sentiments in survivors of the armed conflict in the city of Medellín, Colombia, through qualitative research. In total, 32 people affected by different victimising acts in the context of the armed conflict participated. There is a direct relationship between moral sentiments and the processes of handling and processing loss. Moral sentiments frame the experience of emotions in the victim, after the events have occurred, which influence the way in which the pain experienced is processed. These sentiments permeate the processes of dealing with the incident in survivors, the ways in which they perceive themselves and the perpetrators, and the social stances they adopt to face life. We conclude that moral factors play a role in the emotional recovery of victims and are indicative of the possibility or difficulty of processing the events that occurred.

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Experiencias de duelo y sentimientos morales en sobrevivientes del conflicto armado en Medellín, Colombia

RESUMEN

El objetivo del estudio es comprender la experiencia de duelo y sentimientos morales de los sobrevivientes al conflicto armado en la ciudad de Medellín, Colombia, a través de una investigación cualitativa. En total participaron 32 personas afectadas por diferentes hechos victimizantes en el contexto del conflicto armado. Existe una relación directa entre los sentimientos morales y los procesos de elaboración y tramitación de la pérdida. Los sentimientos morales enmarcan la experiencia de emociones en la víctima, luego de ocurridos

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los hechos, que influyen en cómo van tramitando el dolor vivido. Estos sentimientos permean los procesos de gestión del hecho en los sobrevivientes, las formas en que se perciben a sí mismos y a los victimarios y las posturas sociales que adoptan para afrontar la vida. Se concluye que los factores de tipo moral intervienen en el restablecimiento emocional de las víctimas y señalan la posibilidad o dificultad para la elaboración de los hechos acontecidos.

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Introduction

The victims of the Colombian armed conflict present with different sequelae affecting their physical and mental health due to the various victimising events they have been subjected to. This includes forced displacement, threats, homicide, anti-personnel mines, abduction, enforced disappearance, abandonment or forced dispossession of land, psychological injuries or confinement, among others.¹ In Colombia, in January 2021, the number of registered victims was 9,099,358, which is the equivalent of 18.85% of the country's inhabitants. In Antioquia, 1,701,482¹ have been identified, which represents an issue of national interest in terms of implementing measures to restore rights and provide comprehensive reparation to this population affected by the conflict.

Violence does not only affect the cognitive, emotional and social spheres of victims' lives. It may be the cause of mental disorders such as post-traumatic stress and major depressive disorder.² It also causes profound moral damage, understood to be "any painful change in spirit, consisting of deep worries, or states of acute irritation that affect (...) the emotional equilibrium of people and affects the ability to think, love or feel".³ In addition to this, other sequelae result, such as hopelessness, fear, sadness and resentment. These are consequences that disrupt individuals' life plans and affect the social fabric of the communities in which they live, as they are events that break away from everything that individuals at some point conceived as inalienable.

Therefore, studies emerge that aim to gain an understanding of the moral sentiments, enabling their influence on the construction of the social fabric and sociopolitical stances of victims to be analysed.⁴ One of these studies sought to understand the new forms of civic responsibility that are constructed through the expression of moral sentiments in the context of "educative" practices developed by students who are victims or otherwise of the armed conflict. It is concluded that moral sentiments are motives for action and tools that contribute to generating new civic responsibility, as students managed to develop sentiments that convey a broad political meaning.⁵

Regarding moral sentiments, a reference of moral psychology, they can be defined as part of the notion of moral meaning as an internal perceptual structure that enables human beings to approve or disapprove of something.⁶ In turn,

Hume presents a moral proposal affirming the preponderance of sentiments over reason,⁷ which is later reinforced with the allegory of the elephant (emotions) and the rider (reason), stating that, while reason gives order to experience, experience is subject to passions and emotions.⁸ Moreover, it is noted that sentiments originate from interpersonal relationships and social interaction^{9,10} and become signals established from childhood so we are warned of and react to wrongdoing and can overcome in moral terms.¹¹ On the other hand, moral sentiments are linked to the approval or disapproval of situations or what is considered good or bad for an individual. With this moral content, emotions are expressed,¹² including empathy, sympathy, passion, gratitude, resentment, justice and remorse. These are just some of the sentiments mentioned by the author and which served as the foundation for the analysis of this study. Family and culture influence the experience of emotions such as sadness, fear, disgust and anger, as they condition norms, beliefs, thoughts, ways of expressing things and objects chosen to experience emotions and sentiments.¹³ In other words, moral sentiments are shaped by the moral evaluation that people make in their environment and influence their actions and attitudes.

Moral emotions are classified into four subgroups. The first contains the moral emotions of condemnation, which arise from the interruption of moral structures: anger, disgust, contempt and outrage. The second subgroup of moral emotions is self-condemnation, occurring when an individual perceives that they have not complied with a social norm: shame and guilt. The following emotions are related to the suffering of others, such as compassion. Lastly, there are the emotions of admiration, which include gratitude, admiration and devotion.¹⁴

By investigating the subjective experience of victims after the events, grief was found to be an area of analysis that enabled us to get closer to the psychological reality of those affected. Grief can be understood to be a response to the loss of that which is dear, loved or valued, which requires a psychological process in the griever to accept the loss and manage to renounce it to rebuild his/her life, recognising its absence.¹⁵ Likewise, grief involves a process of breaking away from the world of assumptions, which refers to mental schemes that people construct about what is true about the world, about others and about themselves. These include general assumptions about life and specific assumptions about what is loved, based on the expectation that what is loved will always be

there.¹⁶ Grief is a task that requires active participation from the griever. In the face of grief, four tasks are present: (a) accepting the reality of the loss, which implies intellectually and emotionally admitting the loss; (b) working through the emotions and pain, recognising the emotions being experienced (e.g., anger and guilt) as a natural part of the grieving process; (c) adjusting to an environment in which what has been lost is no longer present, readjusting meaning and life projects, based on the transformations that this brings about, and (d) emotionally rearranging the connection with what has been lost, readjusting the psychological representation of the lost person or thing and rearranging energies in one's environment.¹⁷

Due to the uniqueness of victims' psychological experience of their loss, research interests arise to delve deeper into this aspect, such as a study conducted in 18 people on grief resulting from forced displacement, who described a variety of physical and symbolic losses that this event created and can hinder or help in working out grief. It concludes that talking of a single grieving process is difficult, as people experience multiple losses when dispossessed of their homes (loss of place, material goods and bonds created) which makes it possible or impossible to work out the loss, indicating that not every displacement experience entails working out grief, as there are personal or contextual factors that facilitate or hinder the griever from processing the events.¹⁸

Another study investigated peace and conflict narratives in victim families and their children, and concluded that there are families who, although they have experienced various acts of victimisation, when placed in a new context, experience significant learning that promotes solidarity behaviours geared towards constructing peace.¹⁹

Therefore, recognising and studying moral sentiments has an important place in analysing how survivors of a conflict can develop grieving processes⁵ and allows us to investigate the subjective experience of victims and direct emotional reparation measures as an important factor, and provided for in Colombian Law 1448 of 2011.

Methods

A qualitative study was conducted with a comprehensive hermeneutical approach that, on the one hand, enables the rational reconstruction of specific knowledge (whether in its historical or synchronic progression) and, on the other, critical self-reflection about the topic addressed.²⁰ To this end, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were used as research techniques. A total of 10 semi-structured interviews and two focus groups were carried out, in which a total of 32 armed conflict victims participated who met the following inclusion criteria: being registered in the Registro Único de Víctimas [Single Registry of Victims] (RUV), being of legal age (≥ 18 years old) and residing in the city of Medellín, Antioquia.

A matrix of analysis categories was used to systematise and analyse the information. Lastly, all participants signed an informed consent form to take part in the research, and their

confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed with regard to processing the information they provided.

Results

Factors involved in the grieving process of survivors of the armed conflict in the city of Medellín

The place of loss

The grieving process is approached from the experience of the loss of a bond that was and that is no longer and the representation or meaning that the person attributes to it.²¹ Thus, for victims of the armed conflict, it is important to take into account the type of victimising event and the relationship with the person, place or context in place prior to the event. This occurs in forced displacement cases, where material losses such as housing and belongings are described, as well as changes in culture, customs and values, due to the need to move to a new place requiring an adaptation process.²²

In this regard, the loss can be related to unexpected changes in which there is a shift from the permanence of ties to an unexpected break in ties, as a participant explained. "As a result of everything we lost, because there was a lot we lost, in my case, our culture, our traditions and our beliefs are in danger of extinction. All of that was a total reversal and is something that, no matter how much psychological therapy you receive, no matter how many talks, is a fact that will not be forgotten. On the contrary, it is there forever" (Miriam, 34 years old, 21 April 2020).

Moreover, the importance of mediators is evident¹⁷ in order to understand participants' grieving processes, through the nature of the bond or attachment they had with the person, place or living conditions they had before the events occurred. Examples of this can be found in the case of those who lost their belongings and were forced to move from the countryside to the city, which leads to a cultural change. In addition to the place, cases are found in which the loss involves emotionally close people who, based on the role they had in the survivor's life, considerably affect their meaning of life. In the words of an interviewee, "She was like my emotional support, she was the person who gave me security at the time; not only financial security, which provided us with food and housing, but also because she was the only person I could rely on at the time. So, she really was a great support and we also had a very great bond because at the time she was my everything" (Juan, 38 years old, 7 April 2020).

This enables us to see the meaning of loss when the griever had a more dependent relationship with the direct victim and the psychological processes that this puts into action in their adaptation to the setting, which differs from the case of those who had a more distant relationship with the affected person.

Based on these stories, it can be affirmed that losses generate other types of losses, so it can be inferred that not every broken bond caused by victimisation results in grieving processes. Instead, everything depends on psychological resources and the griever's context.¹⁸

Physical and emotional sequelae

In the grieving process, some participants reported the onset of somatisations, physical illnesses and emotional disorders, such as depression. Just as fear, anger or sadness occur in this process, one of the victims shared that, "It made me very sad and I distanced myself from many people. I wanted to be alone, I wanted to be isolated, I didn't want to share anything with anyone and I spent many years like that. Since I had lost my husband and two children and experienced the enforced disappearance of one of my brothers, I became very depressed." (Sandra, 64 years old, 18 February 2020).

The influence of emotional states on the behaviours participants adopt and the difficulty arising from having experienced revictimisation is detected. The above is related to the losses and grief in forced displacement in which bodily manifestations are reported that, beyond physical illness, speak of identifying emotional sequelae, which is why they "frequently mention stress and depression to explain the bodily manifestations associated with the violence experienced".²¹

Breaking away from the world of assumptions

When armed conflict survivors know how the events took place, there is a break away from the person's world of assumptions, which creates a situation of not knowing what to do about it and survivors may adopt a strategy of reviewing the possibility of finding something that proves the assumptions. However, no proof is found to reaffirm them, which is why it is difficult to believe and immediately accept what happened. When one of the participants received news that her son had been murdered, she said, "This is a nightmare. I am dreaming. It is not true" (Clara, 53 years old, 18 February 2020).

As such, individuals start by denying the event after receiving news about it, news which shatters the world of assumptions¹⁶ regarding the expectation of constancy of the bond, which drives an unforeseen change in the relationship or representation of the bond that there was.

This is how the sentiments of unease and uncertainty emerge due to not knowing what will happen after the event, what will become of one's life and how to face life without a loved one. This is particularly true for victims who were financially dependent on or had a very close relationship with the deceased. Therefore, there is a breakaway from ideals, projects and goals, leading to uncertainties about the future and requiring new strategies and new ways of thinking to be adopted that enable the griever to move forward. Hence, the transformation of the world of assumptions becomes a significant element in victims' grieving processes.

Factors indicating the possibility of working out grief

Transformation of the world of assumptions

In the accounts of some participants, psychosocial transition processes could be recognised in which working out grief "requires not only the renunciation (or relocation) of the bond with what was lost, but also the transformation of the world

of assumptions that enables the griever to adjust to the new reality of life".²³ The above can be seen in Juan's story after losing his mother. "I felt that I had lost my life, and in fact, after her passing, I feel as I have been reborn and have had to build a new, very different life and come to terms with the idea of a life in which she would no longer be present" (Juan, 38 years old, 7 April 2020).

Grievors come to terms with the possibility of living life after what happened and finding new ways of thinking, being and acting in a world in which the loss is admitted or the pain experienced is accepted to thus move forward. They consider a new future that gives rise to reconfiguring their existential meaning and life projects.

Rethinking oneself from new scenarios

Armed conflict survivors are located in new spaces that allow them to transform their reality after the event, find resources that make it possible to work out the pain of what occurred and thus find new ways of being in their immediate setting. In this regard, skills such as leadership are detected through participation groups and psychosocial care for victims and memory reconstructions processes. Likewise, it is recognised that many of their personal experiences also generate opportunities, as one of the participants indicated. "All this has served to help others. We have a garden project to grow. There we share and heal. The earth helps us heal while we work" (Esther, 48 years old, 21 April 2020).

In addition to healing through groups, meaning is found in helping other people who have gone through similar situations, with the purpose of having their stories recognised and obviously not repeated. Clara, who suffered the murder of one of her children who was serving in the military in 2008 affirms this. "We are in a place and scenario where we never thought we would be. We now take advantage of our rights to participate. We are the voices of other people who have not spoken" (Clara, 53 years old, 18 February 2020).

This is how meanings emerge associated with the help of others and community participation initiatives, which in turn allow these groups to share with others in the same situation and find in them understanding and an opportunity to work through grief. This was also the case for Marcos. "I started to go out, to meet with other victims and make an impact in the places where victims were and grieve. Because if you don't grieve, it doesn't change. You don't change; you don't prosper; you remain stagnant. So, the only way is by going out and sharing with other people" (Marcos, 62 years old, 16 January 2020).

Moreover, some interviewees have found different support tools in the grieving process, such as family support, turning to God as an emotional mentor, film, literature, and focusing more on themselves and on the search for their own well-being. We see how different social contexts that enable processing the event come into play through community participation initiatives, community creations and projects, and identifying with others who have gone through similar

situations in victim participation settings. However, we simultaneously see grieving work that is based on an individual's own interests, decisions and needs. This allows us to note the importance of strengthening the individual/world/society dynamic as fundamental in overcoming pain and its ability to favour processing acts of victimisation.

The moral sentiments of armed conflict survivors in the city of Medellín

Below are some of the moral sentiments identified in participants' accounts.

Compassion

Compassion is experienced more intensely when you see the degree of pain that may have been caused to other victims. This sentiment can be understood as "the inference that another suffers or endures something and includes the desire to alleviate the perceived suffering".¹⁴ This moral sentiment can be felt towards other people through the desire that no one else suffer the hardships of armed conflict and, in turn, towards those who have endured some victimising event, hoping that there will be psychological redress that enables a new life cycle to begin, where they do not have to experience the consequences of armed conflict. Attributions of compassion towards the perpetrators were found, since in the interviewees' narratives it was said that perhaps some people did what they did not by a decision they made, but because they had also been victims of the conflict and were involuntarily recruited by some armed group or criminal gang. Regarding this matter, one interviewee said, "I feel sorry for those people, because now that we have learned and know a little more about this, all of a sudden those people were also forced to do that, meaning they were recruited and forced" (Mercy, 48 years old, 21 April 2020).

However, the opposite point of view also exists, where interviewees say they have no compassion for the perpetrators because they did not think about the damage they would cause. There is a clear contrast of stances in which how the perpetrators are evaluated comes into play. This in turn enables us to think about moral sentiments from different perspectives, through the contrast between theory, victim subjectivity and the impact of their immediate context.

Outrage

Outrage arises from thinking that you are not able to do anything or feeling powerless when the time comes to act on the event that occurred. In these circumstances, "why" is a question that comes up, alluding to the causes of the event or for what reasons it happened directly to one person and not another. It can be said that one of the consequences of outrage is the desire for revenge, not necessarily carried out physically, but it is psychologically expressed in the victim, as evidenced by this testimony: "It makes me want to go there too and attack the person. That's what it causes: outrage" (Marcos, 62 years old, 16 January 2020).

It can be argued that outrage occurs from a social point of view and other psychological point of view; social, due to the fact that an armed group caused a victimising event without having a just cause, in addition to the accusation from society, and psychological, because there are sequelae in which self-esteem and emotional stability deteriorate.

Justice

The sentiment of justice refers to the act of providing armed conflict victims with comprehensive reparation, clarifying the truth, the necessary measures being taken against the perpetrators or the hope that their actions will somehow not go unpunished. Justice takes on different connotations for each victim because some associate it with criminal punishment, with sociopolitical redress for the damages caused, while others associate it with justice from a supreme being, as stated in one of the focus groups. "May God do justice. Divine justice takes time, but it will arrive sooner or later" (Rosa, 54 years old, 18 February 2020).

Regardless of the type of justice victims conceive, its goal or purpose is linked to a "punishment", as it can give rise to psychological relief. However, it is not a determinant of the grieving process, because whether or not justice is served can be determined by factors beyond the individual's control.

Resentment

The interviewed survivors admit resentment decreased as a result of receiving news about the perpetrators' situations, such as the fact of having been arrested by the authorities. Likewise, the decision to stop feeling rancour is associated with the impact it could have on an individual's health.

Revenge

Initial desires and thoughts of revenge towards the perpetrators are admitted, but value systems prevent people from acting on them, as is evident in what Marcos says. "At the time I felt: 'what I wouldn't give to catch him and make him disappear', and then I thought, 'Ah, let's leave this to God'" (Marcos, 62 years old, 16 January 2020).

It is found that this moral sentiment can occur, but it is restricted by the addition of new thoughts that enable victims not to carry out acts of revenge, but instead find other alternatives to deal with what occurred.

Guilt

With regard to the sentiment of guilt, two aspects were found. In one, victims question themselves and try to search within to find the cause of what happened and, in the other, they allude to other subjects or external factors. As such, guilt "is a type of rage directed against the victim, as the victim reacts to the perception that they have committed an injustice or caused harm".²⁴ One of the subjects said "Because I started to blame myself. (...) Why did it have to happen to me?" (Andrés, 19 years old, 23 April 2020).

On the other hand, there are cases in which the perpetrators' acts are justified when they acted under the command of

a figure with greater power. Therefore, the need to place the blame for what happened somewhere arises when the events have been better assimilated. This sentiment decreases over time. On the contrary, when what occurred is not accepted, the situation can give rise to other moral sentiments such as resentment and difficulty forgiving.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a sentiment that arises from two variables, one positive and the other negative, i.e. you either forgive or you do not. Those who admit there is a possibility they will forgive refer to the need to do so to improve their well-being, as evidenced by the following testimony: "Not forgiving gave us cancer, that is a cancer" (Fabiola, 58 years old, 18 February 2020).

Likewise, forgiveness is chosen as a strategy to reduce the pain experienced, as Laura states. "I feel like now I can finally remember without feeling pain" (Laura, 37 years old, 19 April 2020).

Moreover, in some cases, victims decide not to forgive, since the victim finds understanding what happened and the mechanisms that led the perpetrators to perform the act inadmissible. The decision not to forgive makes the grieving process gradual or more complex, whereas forgiveness has also been used as a coping strategy leading to a different emotional reaction in the victim when remembering the events. Those who say forgiveness is impossible, question whether you can actually experience it deep down. Likewise, forgiving is associated with being a personal decision.

Empathy

This sentiment emerges from the experience of pain or desire to help people who have been through similar events or are still exposed to contexts that continue to be affected by armed conflict. This concurs with other studies where participants' stories identify with life stories in which empathy and solidarity emerge.¹⁹ "Right now, I think that and I am trying. I am trying to read, to understand, to listen to other people who have gone through much more critical situations than me" (Laura, 37 years old, 19 April 2020).

In addition to putting themselves in the place of other victims, attributions were found in considering the place of the State, which must respond to multiple cases of people who also claim their rights. Little empathy from some professionals to understand what victims have experienced and distance from this moral sentiment towards the perpetrators are found.

Gratitude

The sentiment of gratitude occurs when recognising social, family and institutional support, as well as when assessing psychosocial and professional support processes. It also occurs when victims differentiate between personal achievements and new experiences that they never thought they had had. In some cases, gratitude is understood to be a strategy to redefine the present, alluding to the new learning and experiences that have helped them revive and strengthen their life projects.

Moral sentiments in the grieving process

Moral sentiments are intrinsically linked to the experience and processing of grief. This is due to the fact that they are permeated by the notions of what is good or bad for an individual, their idiosyncrasies and their way of relating to the social context. This relationship between moral sentiments and grief could be represented by the following story: "When I would see them before, I felt outrage. Not anymore. Now I feel like peace and forgiveness, because that is how you commit to peace, because so many of us dream of it. And I say that to achieve it, you have to heal" (Marcos, 62 years old, 16 January 2020).

Likewise, an Afro-descendant woman who was the victim of sexual violence, abortion, the murder of her mother and forced displacement stated, "At the time of the events, you, amidst the innocence, you feel pain, you feel like taking revenge, you feel loneliness, you feel guilt too. However, let's say that now, I have overcome things and do not remember them with pain, but rather with more reflection" (Margarita, 52 years old, 21 April 2020).

We speak of an emotional transformation detected by comparing the immediate emotional experiences of the events and what is felt in the present when evaluating what was experienced. Sentiments such as guilt, revenge and resentment change, so the event can be remembered without the same emotional content from the start. However, when sentiments such as resentment, rancour and the desire not to forgive have not waned, processing the loss becomes more difficult. "I still feel anger, I still feel that despair, like helplessness (...) I mean, when emotionally faced with the event, I don't think that much has changed" (Juan, 38 years old, 7 April 2020).

The emotional change of victims in the face of the events is largely due to support groups. It is precisely through these groups that the victims carry out different activities and work through topics that help them work out their grief, as well as find comprehension and empathy from group members.

Discussion

[2] Grief and the moral sentiments of armed conflict survivors in the city of Medellín

Various factors influence the reconstruction of victims' lives. Great importance is given to support groups, in which participants feel understood due to their shared experiences. Victims also agree that, through these groups, they can construct project initiatives and represent all those who have been armed conflict victims, while healing their pain through social interaction. This concurs with approaches that affirm that emotional support does not depend solely on the type of relationship between the person providing support and the person receiving it. Instead, there can be harmony between the supporter's personal experience with the problem,²⁵ in this case the armed conflict victims. That is why the victims feel supported, not only because they simply belong to a group,

but because, among all the members, there are similar experiences in their stories that make them feel more understood.

Some studies draw similar conclusions regarding the importance of group support for coping with pain, loneliness, sadness and desolation, where the memory construct enables grief to be processed. However, they affirm that, although there are similarities with regard to life experiences, pain cannot be shared because it is a personal search that occurs together with others, but it is experienced individually.²⁶

In this regard, the interviewees who participated in the research were victims of different violent events originating from the armed conflict that led to various losses marked by intense pain and great complexity in working out grief. This situation gave rise to various strategies emerging to face the grieving process and deal with the violent experience, including self-support groups and religious practices.

In this regard, in addition to attending the support groups, some participants resort to religious practices where they work on forgiveness and also feel tranquillity and safety. People thus learn the concept of forgiveness mainly through religion. God is mentioned as a facilitator of the process.²⁷ Moreover, religious beliefs enable victims to give new meaning to their personal realities, which have been questioned due to the violent loss of their family members, with new spiritual meaning that allows them to face grief through sentiments of forgiveness and reconciliation in the face of the perpetrators, as well as sentiments of faith in being spiritually reunited with loved ones who died due to the conflict.²⁸ Therefore, that which is symbolic emerges as fundamental to the grieving process of victims, since the meanings that each of them give to the victimising event will enable a new reparation process to begin that contributes to decision-making and establishing strategies to deal with grief. Thus, "working out grief for people close to the victims of enforced disappearance is a process that not only concerns said people, since, as there is no body and the truth regarding what occurred is unknown, it makes breaking the tie more complex. It is to this extent that symbolic reparation becomes very important, as it goes hand in hand with acquiring tools to accept the loss."²⁹

Regarding moral sentiments, it is important to mention that they are part of everyday life and that each individual acts in accordance with their sentiments in a given situation, which is connected to what Martha Nussbaum proposed. "What distinguishes emotions from natural impulses is that they have an object, meaning that they are about something."³⁰ Regarding the situation experienced by armed conflict victims, the same applies. The moral sentiments that the interviewees mentioned they feel arise from different experiences linked to the armed conflict. Each situation generates moral sentiments and, even though many people have the same sentiments terminologically speaking, the meaning that each individual gives the sentiment differs. This is due to factors such as mental structure, system of beliefs and values, characteristics of the immediate context, and the social support that they perceive. Limiting the ability of subjects to

manage their grieving process without considering the contexts in which pain is processed is thus not possible. This is because in some cases, it is external examples that enable the subject to materially and symbolically transcend their condition as a victim and manage the grief appropriately.

Furthermore, it is important to note that this study only addressed some moral sentiments that could be identified in what participants said, while taking into account that victimising events "involve a number of emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses which test humans' capacity to endure this painful event".³¹ In this regard, each individual processes and expresses their emotions and sentiments differently, based on their personal, family and social resources. This enables them to face the victimising event and take on their grieving process.

Compassion, outrage, justice, revenge, guilt, forgiveness, empathy and gratitude are some of the moral sentiments expressed by those interviewed. However, if approached via the multidisciplinary development of moral sentiments, there are a variety of sentiments that are related to one another, such as the case of resentment which "nears that of anger. However, the main difference resides in the fact that anger is openly displayed. Resentment, on the other hand, remains hidden. It is kept as a private conversation"³² which, through investigating the experiences of survivors, was externalised and demonstrated in their accounts.

In this regard, the interviewee testimonies revealed moral sentiments such as shame, guilt and resentment which account for the state of pain and emotional vulnerability they find themselves in based on the relationship constructed between the victimising event and their self-perception. The stories not only focus on the suffering experienced by armed conflict victims and their families, these stories also tell how these people reacted to it, managed resources, sought alternatives and created social and emotional strategies to enable them to redefine their new reality and face the grieving process. Similarly, these moral sentiments give an account of how armed conflict victims face their current day-to-day lives. These sentiments also reveal their future perspectives to take on the challenge of caring for themselves, their families and their communities.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the experience of grief and moral sentiments could not be defined according to each victimisation event, which would enable us to delve deeper into the impact that the event characteristics have on the victim. This issue should be addressed in further studies.

Conclusions

There is a direct relationship between moral sentiments and the processes of working out and processing loss. The former delimits the experience of the victim's emotions after the events occurred, which influences how victims process the pain experienced. It is clear that moral sentiments such as guilt, resentment and revenge towards the event, towards the

perpetrators, towards God, towards society and towards oneself are identified over the short-term as ways of expressing incomprehension and pain. However, over the long-term, sentiments towards other victims and the perpetrators are more likely to appear, such as empathy, compassion or forgiveness, which speak of the participants' capacity to emotionally process and show resilience in the face of the sequelae of the victimisation events.

The victim's decision-making is a factor that comes into play in the transformation of moral sentiments. There are some things that condition the ability to choose and take stances regarding the event. With this, there are cases in which an individual decides whether or not to forgive, fight for their emotional well-being and the reconstruction of their life project, or adopt the strategy of believing that some sentiments cannot be transformed in the victim and, therefore, that it is inconceivable to live accepting or admitting the event, which are factors that manage to condition or affect grieving processes.

In this regard, the transformation of moral sentiments and grief are permeated by an individual's psychological resources, their sociocultural context and the support they perceive from their setting. By identifying the relationship between both categories, admitting that moral factors play a part in victims' emotional reparation is possible. There is therefore a relevant place in working out grief related to the intrinsic issues of the individual, which is in turn linked to external factors.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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